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1826

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE
TO
THE COURSE
OF
ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY,
IN
RUTGERS MEDICAL COLLEGE,

NEW-YORK,

DELIVERED, NOVEMBER 11, 1826.


By JOHN D. GODMAN, M.D.
Professor of Anatomy and Physiology.

NEW-YORK :

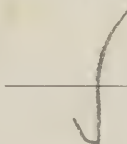
PUBLISHED FOR THE STUDENTS OF RUTGERS COLLEGE,
BY H. STEVENSON, 257 BROADWAY.

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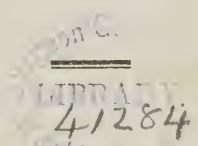
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Southern District of New-York, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the eighteenth day of December, A. D. 1826, in the fifty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America, H. Stevenson, of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit :

“ Introductory Lecture to the course of Anatomy and Physiology, in Rutgers Medical College, in New-York, delivered November 11, 1826. By John D. Godman, M D. Professor of Anatomy and Physiology.”

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled, “ An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned.” And also to an Act, entitled “ an Act, supplementary to an Act, entitled an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

JAMES DILL,
Clerk of the Southern District of New York.

J. SEYMOUR, PRINTER.

*At a Meeting of the Students of Rutgers Medical College
in the City of New-York, November 11th, 1826, it was*

Unanimously Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to wait upon Dr. Godman, to express to him the great gratification they received from his Introductory Lecture, and to assure him that from the opinion they entertain of his private worth, and of his professional attainments, they view his union with this College as a valuable addition to its Medical Faculty, and as affording the happiest prospect to the future prosperity of this Institution.

Resolved further, That the Committee request of Dr. Godman a copy of his Introductory Lecture for the purpose of publication, and that the following gentlemen be that Committee, viz.

HAMILTON MORTON,
HENRY BURNHAM,
WILLIAM H. ELLET.

LECTURE.

THE duty I am honoured with, in this Institution, is that of making known the construction and admirable modes of action of the parts composing the human body. The importance of our subject can scarcely be over-rated—however it may be misunderstood :—it is in itself so excellent—so universal in its application to philosophical and rational medicine—so beneficial to humanity, and admirably suited for displaying the infinitely beneficent wisdom of the Creator, as to be justly entitled to our most profound attention, and worthy of our noblest intellectual energies.

With such a theme to dilate upon, the only difficulty is to decide *where* we shall begin :—numberless interesting topics court our selection; each, capable of affording the purest gratification to minds hungering after knowledge,—or

which delight in exploring those works of nature that are veiled from vulgar eyes, but may always be advantageously scanned by those who tread in the paths of science, with enlightened reason for their guide.

On the present occasion, we shall content ourselves with laying before you a general sketch, of the rise, progress, decline, and decay of the human body, preparatory to some considerations relative to the practical study of our subject, which we are solicitous to urge upon the attention of society at large. We shall then conclude by especially addressing those who are to be the immediate objects of our care.

Man, who eventually becomes "Lord of Creation," by his superiority of intellectual endowment, enters upon the field of his future greatness the most feeble and helpless of all living beings. He is too delicate to sustain the changes of the air he is to breathe :—his hands, those admirable instruments, the makers of all other instruments, are useless and unmanageable. The capacious head, the future throne of his intellect, is too heavy to be supported by his own strength; and his inexpressive eyes are incapable of being advantageously directed towards any object.—

Without the loving and unwearied assiduity of his tender mother, death would speedily silence his feeble wailings; for the flower of the fields, which blooms but for an hour, and then withers away, is not more delicate nor susceptible of destruction, than is the life of the human infant. But, clasped by maternal arms to that fountain of sustenance, which may so justly be termed sacred, from its constituting the first and most endearing link in parental and social feeling, man drinks in life and warmth; his eyes soon learn to distinguish objects, his strength is increased, his senses begin to demand his attention, and that education commences, which is to fit him for assuming his rank among rational and intelligent beings.

These successive changes very gradually ensue: he requires parental attention and assistance long after he has ceased to nestle in the bosom of his mother. At this period his senses are all susceptible and vigorous; his mind begins to exist; it is capable of receiving knowledge, but is not yet an active instrument. Memory is now retentive and predominates over the other faculties. It is the season when the mind requires the most judicious direction, in order that things

may be learned by their right names, and in the right places :—it is the period when the dawning intellect demands the most scrupulous superintendence, that the earliest indications of peculiar bias may be detected, and encouraged or repressed, as circumstances may require. It is the time, of all others, when the most sacred regard to truth should be observed by those who have intercourse with the young—*truth*, not only in relation to great things, or as opposed to direct falsehood—but that truth which states no improbabilities, no fictions, no mysteries—in short, the truth of correct example, in action, word, and look.

The condition of childhood or adolescence is the spring-tide of our existence. All sensations are new, all scenes are inviting; every object is a source of gratification to curiosity. The number and rapidity of our sensations keep up a continual succession of images in the mind; and one so immediately displaces the other, that whether painful or pleasurable, they soon disappear; the hours fleet away with winged swiftness, not counted though deeply felt; not individually productive of remarkable consequences,

—but for ever after treasured in the memory, as the times of peculiar happiness; as the days long gone by—as the golden age of life, for ever fled.

To this period succeeds that of beginning maturity, when the body acquires its full growth, and the slender and awkward boy imperceptibly changes to the vigorous and graceful man. His piping and treble voice, passing through various irregularities, assumes that sonorous strength of intonation so well befitting his condition. The cavities of his skull, previously unmarked by external prominences, now expand. His brow becomes elevated; his eyes more deeply seated in their sockets; his cheeks are broader and higher, and the passions and workings of his mind become imprinted upon his countenance. The rosy, unmeaning, and frolic expressions of his visage are gone; his air is thoughtful and serious. Those who were familiar with him as a child, experience an awkward restraint in addressing him; his parents are conscious of a change without being able to define it. His very mother, who nursed and cherished him through all his infantile troubles, learns to listen to him

with respect, and look upon him with reverence. Henceforth, he assumes his station as a member of the great human family, responsible for his actions solely to his country and his God !

The approach of his sister to the same period of existence, is marked by analogous changes in external appearance, not so striking for their magnitude as from their peculiar character. The whole expression is wonderfully altered ;—there is a singular addition of loveliness to features which may have previously been considered uninteresting and even repulsive. The step, the voice and gestures all declare, that “ Nature’s last, best work,” has assumed all her charms, and is no longer to be approached, except with that homage which her loveliness and innocence never fail to inspire, especially when their natural power is augmented, by that cultivation of mind which imparts vigour to intelligence, and tenfold attraction to beauty.

We next consider our race in their maturity, or summer. The faculties of the mind are advancing to their perfect state ; judgment, or the power of deducing conclusions and principles from observation, predominates over the memory,

and the mind is capable of most intense application to any pursuit. This is the season for exertion; the time for providing future subsistence; for attending to the education of our offspring; as well as for fixing our own habits of thinking and acting. It is the season for conferring benefits on our fellow-creatures by the employment of our leisure, and winning that influence which is necessary to the more effectual discharge of the debts we owe to society. At this period, the body, which has ceased to grow in height, acquires a greater degree of breadth and fulness. The soft and delicate texture of the solids gives place to a greater rigidity of fibre, and the strength of the limbs is in full vigour. This period endures for a variable lapse of time, modified by temperance, exercise, climate, and occupation.

Next, autumn comes, the season of the “sere and yellow leaf.” The suppleness and mobility of the limbs diminish; the senses are less acute, and the impressions of external objects are less remarked. The fibres of the body grow more rigid; the emotions of the mind are more calm and uniform;—the eye loses of its lustrous keen-

ness of expression; the skin hangs loosely; the teeth generally begin to fail, if they have not previously, and the digestion proportionally declines. The mind no longer roams abroad with its original excursiveness, though it is still capable of intense and advantageous application to particular studies. The power of imagination is in great degree lost. Sad experience has robbed external objects of their illusiveness; the thoughts come home: it is the age of reflection! The flight of time is also marked by the change of the firm tone of manhood for an occasional jarring and dissonant note, and the head either exhibits the venerable snows of age, or the hair falls off from the place it has so long protected and adorned. At this season we reap the full fruit of our early labours, and live over again in the persons of our descendants. It is the period in which we receive the just tribute of veneration and confidence from our fellow-men, if we have lived to deserve it, and are entitled to the respect and confidence of the younger part of mankind, in exact proportion to the manner in which our own youth has been spent, and our maturity improved.

“Last comes the lean and slippered pantaloon.” The marks of decline and decrepitude become more perceptible. The teeth are all gone—the jaws approach each other—the face is sunk—the eye quenched in rheum—the voice feeble, unequal, and whistling—the muscles wasted—the gait tottering—the sight and hearing rapidly fail—and the other senses are almost obliterated. The mind lives not in the present—the memory acts not upon things of to-day. The green hills, the joyous gambols, the pure friendships of childhood all thrill through the heart. The ancient man sits in the midst of a generation thrice removed from his own: he appears insensible to those around him—he is deaf and participates not in their joys: he beholds *their* sorrows with a cold unfeeling eye. But, why does he, at times, convulsively grasp his staff—and why does an unheeded tear occasionally trickle down his furrowed cheek? He is looking back—beyond the existence of the present generation:—perhaps the image of her who has slept in dust for half a century—she in whom his youthful heart was “garnered up,” appears before his memory as once she bloomed:—per-

chance the mother who watched or wept o'er his cradle, and enhanced the joyousness of his early life, is breathing in his ear—or the bosom friend and companion of his youthful wanderings smiles upon him, with the truth and ardour he has so long been a stranger to. Where are *they*?—Another people has grown to maturity since their graves were sodded. Their memory has perished, except in the aged man, whose long dried fountains of sensibility gush forth afresh as such recollections rise within his mind.

The approach of death from slow-coming decline and infirmity of nature, is marked by the eventual obliteration of all the faculties of mind and body. The breathing becomes slower, and slower; the heart intermits its pulsations; the blood loiters along the veins; the extremities grow cold, and the feeble flame of life lessens until it ceases to be perceptible, except at the centre, where it faintly glimmers for a time, and then is gently extinguished without sigh or groan—without a trace of emotion or of pain.

We have thus, in a cursory manner, followed man from the cradle to the grave; but we are well aware that few persons are permitted to ex-

perience all the seasons and changes we have described. Accident and disease are daily destroying vast numbers of our race in every stage of existence—bidding us to look for more enduring happiness than can be founded on so frail a tenure as human life. It is, however, a fact, that our fondness for life increases in exact proportion as life diminishes in value. In the early part of our existence, death is braved, and danger courted, as if life were of slight account, or could not readily be lost. Death is not feared, because to the young it seems distant and improbable. In maturity, we are more cautious, having learned something of the true value of life, and feel more convincingly the probabilities of losing it. But in extreme old age, when all enjoyments are at an end, we cling to the cup to the last, and drain it to the bitterest dregs—even then relinquishing it solely from inability to retain it still longer at our lips.

Yet we are not to suppose that every season of life, except that of extreme decrepitude, has not its peculiar pleasures. Those of youth, and middle age, most of us are acquainted with; Cicero has left a delightful description of those

of advanced life, which Erasmus, a learned and pious christian, says he could not, at any time, read without having his eyes to overflow with tears of pleasure.

It is not from man alone that nature exacts this tribute of decay. If we extend our observation throughout the universe, we shall discover analogous changes going on in all animate and inanimate matter. There is *in all things* belonging to our globe, a perpetual tendency to *change* of form, without the *destruction* or *annihilation* of any one principle. Whenever animation is finally suspended, the chemical affinities of the mass come into operation—the forms which lately withstood all external changes, become affected by the slightest vicissitudes of heat and moisture, and speedily putrefy. The co-operation of vast numbers of insects hastens the disintegration—the aqueous and aerial particles exhale, while the solid and more earthy portions go to aid in the composition of a richer soil, for the benefit of other forms of animated bodies. Thus, all things *must* change, according to their nature, from the granite mountains, to the mushroom on the dunghill. It is the attribute of God alone to

be “without variableness or shadow of turning”—to be immoveable, while all else is in unceasing motion.

Tu ! tempus ab ævo ire jubes !

Stabilisque manens, das cuncta moveri.

Boëthius.

Yet, notwithstanding that the all-wise has ineffaceably impressed the character of mutability on all matter, human pride and affection have, in various ages and countries, attempted to give an artificial permanence to forms, sealed for destruction by the very laws of their composition. These laws, irresistible in their operation and certain in their effects, are infinitely perfect and beneficent; for, when life is prolonged to its latest term, they secure the gradual abstraction of all the senses connecting us with the external world, and when death ensues, cause a speedy removal of materials, which might prove noxious to other beings.

Seeing then that man must die—that the sentence must be accomplished—“dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return”—what are we to think of those, who are so restricted in their

modes of thinking, as to feel and express towards the cultivators of our glorious science, prejudices worthy of the most unenlightened times ? Well informed upon almost all other subjects, vast numbers of men appear to shun information upon this—like children, who lie shuddering all night at a shadow upon the wall, fearing to approach it closely and dispel their idle terrors. Such persons associate the idea of anatomy with barbarousness and cruelty. They regard the man who strews the plain with thousands of dead, immolated for the gratification of his ambition—as a *hero*, worthy of laurels and applause—while they view the devoted student of our science almost with disgust, and are ever ready to join in the clamour against him as a violator of the *repose* of the tomb ; a disturber of the *dead*. Strangest of all, this happens in a christian land—where devout and faithful ministers of the gospel are daily engaged in declaring, that the soul is immortal—the body corruptible and evanescent, and the Creator omnipotent !

No individual can feel greater abhorrence at the outrages occasionally committed upon the

feelings of surviving friends, than we do, because we believe such actions to be both *unjustifiable* and *unnecessary*. The prisons, penitentiaries, and lazar houses of our country, daily send forth multitudes of dead, who, having seldom or never contributed to the well-being of society, during life, should all be made tributary to their fellow-creatures after death. Far from storing these bodies away, during winter, heaping them up to taint the freshness of the ensuing summer's air, they should be devoted to the improvement of medicine, the extension of knowledge, and the general good of the human race. Wherever this proper and judicious use of such subjects is permitted, encroachment upon private places of interment, is utterly unknown. The anatomist has it always in his power to prevent it, by warning his servants that if they transgress in that way, he will immediately deliver them up to deserved punishment. But the direct operation of all clamour or restrictive regulations, on this point, however severe, is to produce the very evils they are intended to prevent. If the risk be great, and the peril of life and property highest in degree, the

anatomist seeks the material for his studies, wherever suspicion is least liable to fall. It is in vain to think, that laws can be made that will put an end to the study of anatomy. Medicine cannot exist without it; the people themselves demand that their physicians should possess a knowledge of it. But laws may be made which will drive students from our borders, to situations free of such besotted prejudice. Laws may be made which can turn perennial streams of wealth from our own citizens, and bestow, not only the money, but the high scientific character our sons may obtain, upon the institutions of other places.* We repeat it to be unnecessary that such an occurrence as the breaking into private grounds should ever take place, were the proper policy in relation to the public ones pursued. The feelings of friends need *never* be subjected to the agonizing emotions that are produced by the clandestine removal of the bodies of those they have loved.

But, as to the *repose* of the tomb—the *disturbance* of the *dead*—it is mockery of common sense, and totally absurd: it impugns the verity of the religion we believe most holy—it is an indignity

* See the note at the end of this Lecture.

offered to the character of the Supreme ! What avails your profound interments—your six feet of earth—or iron coffins or leaden shrouds ? The moment life departs, every breeze that blows wafts myriads of insects to the feast—they deposit their eggs unseen by the friends who watch at the side of the corpse. Committed with the body to the earth, they are dormant only till sufficient heat is evolved by putrefaction to call them into activity ; then they feed to fatness on the rankling corse ; and when ready to assume their perfect shape, work their way to the surface, and wing their flight to repeat a similar process upon other dead. Tell us then of the *repose* of the tomb—when the bodies we so carefully deposit in earth are not only dissolved by the chemical affinities of their own elements, but serve as food to myriads of insects, and are, sooner or later, carried abroad upon the four winds of heaven. Grant that every precaution be taken, and that we pile defences around these perishing relics, heaping brick, or marble, or granite upon them ? 'Tis but deferring the disturbance of their *repose* a few years longer—until the monuments themselves perish and are no more, from the uninterrupted operation of those

laws which command all matter to change form. The finest sand washed by the surf on the shore, once formed an integral part of mountains, which might, in their day, have been called everlasting, but which nature forbade to be immutable !

The object of the science we come prepared to teach, is, to display the curious and wonderful structure of man: to investigate the causes of disarray and disease, in order to minister to the afflicted—it is to examine the dead before their first great change of form, in order that we may successfully bind up the wounds and mitigate the sufferings of the living. It is not mere curiosity that leads us to endure all the privations and unpleasantness of making such investigations. We come with the respectful and serious earnestness of men aware of whose presence we are in: we study the instruments of motion, that we may prevent it from being suspended; we associate with death, that we may preserve life. We submit to a sad and solitary silence, that we may speak peace and health to the diseased. We breathe noisome, sepulchral vapours, and drive the life-blood from our pallid cheeks to stagnate round our hearts, that we may gain the

only knowledge which can efficiently aid us in warding off the thousand ills that frail mortality is heir to.

Surely we have enough to endure, we suffer enough in feeling and health—in foregoing the enjoyments of social life, and in encountering the stupid misrepresentations of the ignorant: might we not be permitted to hope, that we should escape the prejudices of those who would fain be esteemed enlightened? The man who devotes himself to a life of toil and privation for the benefit of his friends and country, is lauded for his self-denial, his benevolence and patriotism—but, he who transcends the influence of prejudice and ignorance, who separates himself from his fellow-men in order to serve them, who schools his own feelings to endure what otherwise would be as repugnant to him as to others, and submits, without complaint, to all the accidents connected with a study so generally misunderstood—instead of being considered, as he actually is, a benefactor to his race, is too often regarded as something unnatural—insensible to all human emotions; or worthy of reprehension and injury for the very conduct which gives him the strongest

claim upon public gratitude and respect. Enough, we hope, has been said on this subject, to induce those who are not of the profession to feel the importance of aiding us in correcting public sentiment, and giving that freedom to our science, which will secure its benefits to all the world.

We shall conclude the present address by devoting a short time to those who are to be the peculiar objects of our attention, and who are to receive at our hands all the advantages that our reading, observation, experience, and industry, can suggest for their instruction.

He must be more than a stoic, or less than a man, who can look, without emotion, upon an assemblage of those who are dedicated to such a profession as ours, which is to demand all their energies, and is to occupy their entire lives. Commencing with all the buoyancy of youth, in all the eagerness of inexperience, the student of medicine is apt to see nothing in the prospect but emoluments and honours—he hears nothing but sounds of encouragement—he is impelled by a warm and generous enthusiasm, which fears no difficulties, nor anticipates the least delay. Caution him that many have failed in this bril-

liant career—he refers you to the glorious few who have triumphed. Tell him the heights he would ascend are perilous—he still believes that to him they will not prove inaccessible: the benumbing influence of despondency has not yet been felt by him, and why should he think of despair? If, then, we may not hope to impart to the young the prudence which is to be derived from experience alone, we can, at least, effectually serve their interests, by directing their efforts in the most advantageous course, and prevent the waste of that enthusiasm which is to bear them successfully through all the evils incident to so great an enterprise.

The student of medicine, while glancing over the vast field he is destined to explore, is frequently tempted to halt in his career, and exclaim with the illustrious father of our science—“Life is short—art is long; experience fallacious, and judgment difficult.” If the industrious be occasionally disheartened, and those who eagerly seize on every opportunity of gaining knowledge and augmenting their intellectual strength be inclined to despond, what must be the eventual condition of those who loiter through the period of their

studies, as if the great business of life were a jest, or knowledge could be acquired without the effort of a thought. Reflecting upon the business we are engaged in, and the responsibilities to be assumed, it becomes evident, that no time is more valuable and important to us, than that in which we attempt to acquire the elements of our professional education, whence we are to derive the power of deducing principles of action from the study of facts. It is required of us when we enter upon the practice of our profession, to [examine, compare, and decide at a single glance, as if by intuition, in many cases where the decision may result in the safety or destruction of patients. We are, at such times, called upon to exert our highest intellectual qualities, and to exhibit the most convincing proofs that we have conscientiously employed the period when leisure and opportunity were allowed us of becoming deeply imbued with the principles of our art. Our success or failure in these cases, does not affect us merely as individuals, but brightens or tarnishes the profession to which we belong. Instead, then, of being discouraged at the variety of knowledge, which,

under the most favourable circumstances we dare not hope to attain, let us carefully decide on the course we are to pursue—and having decided, press onwards diligently, under the cheering conviction, that if we leave much unattempted, our actual advances are to be permanently and extensively useful.

Anatomy, at all times recognised as of high importance, at present vindicates her claim to an especial degree of your regard, both on account of intrinsic merit, and because of the brilliant rewards promised to her votaries. The improvements which, within a few years past, have imparted so much efficacy and stability to medicine, have grown immediately out of the study of minute anatomy, and the torch, whose steady flame guided BICHAT through the difficult and almost unknown regions of physiology, has since shed a more ample lustre to enable the pathologist to trace the insidious footsteps of disease with precision, and successfully oppose a barrier to its ravages.

In speaking thus, it is not my object idly to vaunt the superiority or exclusive importance of a favourite study, but in the full persuasion that

I shall render you a lasting service if you can be led to appreciate its *true* value. Most of you have read of, and many of you have witnessed some of the extraordinary changes which have occurred in the theory and practice of medicine—*now* no longer what it was even a few years since. *Then*, it was a body of doctrine dependent upon peculiar theoretic views, drawn too often from partial and restricted experience, and the system taught, in great degree, depended upon the ingenuity or eloquence of teachers. *Then* it was almost sacrilege to differ in opinion from the popular leader, whose dogmatical or fanciful absurdities, clothed in all the pomp of words, usurped the place of fact and truth and nature. In that era flourished the sciences of Expectation and Symptomatology, or the arts of waiting for and recording the changeful effects of diseased action, and then abstracting certain aggregations of symptoms or *effects*, as diseases. Thus, substituting the shadow for the substance, and deterring the mind from discovering the actual condition of diseased organs and texture, by occupying it in waiting for the consequences of such disease,

which, under proper treatment, would not be allowed to present themselves.

From the time of Hippocrates to the days of Rush, every leader of medical opinion has attempted to establish a theory of fever. Of the value of these theories, the world has had melancholy experience in their rapid succession, decline, and oblivion. But, the study of the *facts* of fever was left to a much more recent period. The expecting symptomatologist patiently watched by the bedside of expiring humanity, to mark every varying appearance, every fleeting symptom—and thus far merited our gratitude. But when the spark of life was quenched, and the dominion of death began, his study of the disease and his researches were alike at an end. At this point the triumph of modern medicine begins—the voiceless dead are interrogated—and the results already obtained have done more towards the permanent advancement of our science and the interests of humanity, than all the brilliant theories that ever were conceived—than all the eloquence that ever delighted or misled the world! Such being the dawning influence of anatomy on practical medicine, what may we

not hope from its meridian splendour? When all the cultivators of our science become qualified to profit by its light, and co-operate in laying bare the processes of diseased action, so long and so unnecessarily regarded as “hidden mysteries.”

We have heard, but it appears too monstrous for credibility, that even at the present day, hundreds, nay even thousands of (so called) physicians, are to be found in this and other countries, who are not only ignorant of our subject, but are not ashamed to avow their ignorance of it—yet still have the presumption to rank themselves among the honoured members of our profession. If such a state of things can possibly exist, then is it no longer wonderful that medicine should be called conjectural; should sink into insignificance, or be at best a barbarous collection of prescriptions, instead of a body of philosophically deduced principles, qualifying the practitioner to act on all emergencies with energy and efficacy. A practitioner of medicine, without knowledge of anatomy, is a gross absurdity: one might as well speak of honour, without honesty; of virtue without chastity, or good breeding

without decency. Practitioners such individuals may be, but not of medicine—they are practitioners of routine—practitioners on the credulity and forbearance of mankind.

Much of the apathy exhibited towards anatomy is attributable to first impressions made upon students of medicine at the commencement of their career. They are not only alarmed at the supposed boundless extent—but they are wearied at the apparent dryness of the study. They are taught to look upon it as a sort of mystery which can only be known to the initiated—and they are permitted to remain under such erroneous impressions until it is almost impossible to correct them. All that is wanting to prevent these exceedingly injurious consequences to the profession, is, that teachers of anatomy should know and love their science sufficiently, to display it to their students with proper enthusiasm—forgetting themselves in their subject. They would then convince their hearers, without effort, that all of anatomy at present known is attainable even to ordinary capacity—that industry, patient persevering industry, is the most essential requi-

site to success—as before it, every difficulty disappears.

There was a time, it is true, when students and practitioners might with greater reason confess they knew but little of anatomy, because then the minds of their countrymen were enthralled by Superstition and Ignorance—those fiends, which still, though but in few parts of the world, standing aloof from the light which they hate, grin horrible defiance against those who would annihilate their shackles by seeking after the treasures of knowledge commonly buried in the grave. There was a time when, at the peril of life and liberty, students of medicine stole a trembling glance at that glorious book, which is opened to them in the construction of the human body. But those days cannot again return. Over this happy land, the sun of civil and religious liberty has, for half a century, beamed his most cheering irradiations—and the light has not only been shed over the great masses of men, dwelling in our fair cities, but has brightly glimmered even through the crevices of the most distant and rustic habitations.

Henceforth, it is our own fault, if the people do not co-operate with us, in advancing the knowledge of anatomy; it is our fault, if we be not permitted, nay invited, to investigate the effects of disease on the remains of those we have been unable to save from death; thus conferring the last and best boon upon their surviving friends in the ability it may impart to the physician to prevent similar evils in others. To effect this desirable end, it is not necessary that the feelings of friends should be shocked; it is not necessary that any thing should be seen by them that could, without close examination, lead to a suspicion that the hand of the anatomist had been there. When once this is generally understood, and the importance of such examination fairly explained, the study of pathology will be extensively improved, and the practice of medicine incalculably benefited. The obstacles which exist to oppose these researches, grow out of various prejudices, and in no small degree out of the supineness of physicians. We have already glanced at the general want of proper notions relative to our subject: a knowledge of anatomy being deficient, the individual grows contented

with his routine: he thinks he has done his best, and satisfies himself when all is over, that he could have done no more. But, under other views of duty and responsibility, with a better knowledge of anatomy and an anxious wish to discover the causes and effects of disease, he would take every opportunity during his social intercourse with his patients, and when the fate of no individual was pending, of enlightening their minds on the subject, by teaching them something of the laws which operate to keep the system in health—the effects produced by any loss of balance between the different organs, and the benefit to be conferred on the living by exploring in the dead the changes caused by disease. All men are eager for knowledge; all men thirst after a discovery of the causes which destroy that “mystery of mysteries,” life—all men love their own lives sufficiently to bend their natural affections and associations so far, as to yield us, when properly solicited, the advantages we require. It, therefore, requires only the proper disposition on your part, combined with the necessary degree of knowledge, to transcend all prejudice, and serve the interests

of the whole human family. If such things can be effected—and they may daily be witnessed—if the members of our profession can exercise such an unbounded influence over the feelings, the weaknesses, the strength, and the prejudices of humanity, why is it that our profession does not rise, as it ought, to be the head and the heart, the wisdom and the glory of our land? not by interfering with the civil relations of mankind, but by extensiveness of knowledge, and the irresistible influence of virtue?

Under existing systems of education, much cannot be hoped for, beyond the ordinary results. To comprehend the scope and bearing of all the branches of medical science requires more time than any of us bestow—more maturity of judgment than any of us possess, when we first enter upon professional duty. This is the general defect; the besetting sin of existing systems of professional learning. The student of medicine, as a general rule, does not become properly instructed in the true nature and importance of his situation, until much of his time is lost, and he is too deeply involved in the multifarious business of his studies to discover them. He is not

aware that his opportunities of gaining elementary knowledge come but once—and too often he begins the practice of his profession before he has obtained a knowledge of its principles. Years elapse before he discovers all the errors of his commencement, and then he is too entirely thrall'd by business and long established habit to begin anew. Therefore, the influence he should have exercised upon society is lost—the benefits he can confer are infinitely small compared with what they might have been, and he grows gray in the performance of the same round of daily labour, reckless of change.

Those who are engaged in the study of medicine should, in an especial manner, remember, that it is not only their interest, but their duty, to uphold genius, and reward the talents and industry of their teachers. They should never lose sight of the fact, that their own improvement and the character of the profession should always be to them of paramount consideration. That they should support those institutions which beckon industry and talent onwards—which prove that they are devoted to the cause of humanity, the interests of society, and the uni-

versal diffusion of knowledge. They should patronize institutions which are most in accordance with the liberal and enterprising spirit of the times—such as establish, by their actions, that they consider the general good as well as their own advancement, and vindicate their claims to respect, by teaching students as men seriously engaged in the pursuit of knowledge.

In delivering these observations, do not, for a moment, suppose, that they are intended to apply to any individual institution, or to awaken feeling in regard to any set of men. In the performance of our arduous professional duties, it is a rule that should never be infringed, to know no persons, to support no party—except the persons and party be zealously engaged in the great work of building up the character of the medical profession. Having been, during eight years past, almost uninterruptedly engaged in teaching anatomy, the subject of professional education has always been before my view; upon this topic, it has ever been my aim to speak and write as a free man engaged in the discharge of an important trust—as one who loves and honours his profession, believing it to be one of the noblest gifts

of Heaven to man : as one who feels it a sacred duty to urge you to reflect upon the relation you individually and collectively bear to the profession, to your friends and your country.

Who can say what may not be the consequence when all the rising members of our profession go forth, fully qualified to increase its value, being imbued with high moral principle, and replete with that intellectual superiority which looks down with pity upon the ignoble movements of the malevolent and unworthy—when they look upon their art as the means of blessing society, as well as of benefitting themselves—when they exert the influence which it is their duty to acquire, in scattering around them that taste for knowledge, and that disposition to reward its votaries, which is characteristic of those who love the diffusion of light. Judging by the past, we do not despair of seeing much of this accomplished ; and if you will but recollect that *you* owe to society the performance of a part of this great work, its completion may exceed our most sanguine expectations.

Let this possibility be then ever before you, and remember, that the incessant exercise of

your industry is necessary to such success. Delay not until life be far advanced—but from the onset, act with direct reference to this vast object—

“ ——Take the instant way,
 For honour travels in a strait so narrow
 Where one but goes abreast ; keep then the path,
 For emulation hath a thousand sons
 That one by one pursue ; if you give way
 Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,
 Like to an entered tide they all rush by
 And leave you hindmost. ——”



N O T E.

It may not be amiss to add some facts which will enable those who take an interest in the scientific institutions of our country, to form an estimate of some of the benefits conferred by any distinguished school of medicine upon the city in which it is located.

Each student expends, on an average, \$400 during every session. This money is given for tickets of admission to the lectures, for books, boarding, clothing, &c. A class of 150 students, at \$400 each, brings into circulation a gross amount of \$50,000.* The class attending the course of lectures in a neighbouring city, is stated to be 500 in number. Allowing the same average, (which is far below the actual expenditure) that class expends during four months attendance on the lectures, \$200,000. The whole of the money thus expended, goes immediately into the hands of the citizens, from the owners of property down to the humblest mechanics and servants, and the withdrawal of any considerable part of this supply, would be followed by much distress and inconvenience among all those who derive their support from ministering to the members of the class.

But it is not merely by the gross amount expended during the session that the city is benefited by the attendants on a public course. They form acquaintances with men of business, with whom they continue to deal, in many instances, during their lives, and their influence is always favourably exerted towards the place in which they have completed their education, and have formed numerous interesting relations. It is not, therefore, surprising that the municipal authorities, and

* This is about the amount expended this winter in New-York by the present class of Rutgers Medical College.

citizens generally, who properly appreciate such an institution, should concur to offer every possible inducement to students to prefer *their* city and institutions to all others.

Medical education, which, at present, commands a considerable share of public attention, involves in the manner of its administration, some of the dearest interests of society ; those therefore, who engage in discussions arising out of the existing conditions of public institutions, ought carefully to inform themselves of the circumstances which are most favourable to the improvement of medicine, before they side with a party or declaim against individuals.

In our happy country, every individual possessed of the requisite qualifications and character, has the right of teaching the results of his experience and study to whomsoever his instructions may be acceptable. A body of such individuals, whether under the title of University or College, have no other claim upon the public than what they derive from the exertion of their talents and industry, and the benefits they are capable of conferring upon their fellow-citizens. The College may be under the patronage of a state, or it may be supported by the reputation of its teachers alone : it may derive the right to confer scientific honours from the state in which it is located, or from another source ; neither circumstance being of more than relative or nominal importance, since neither affect the excellence of the knowledge imparted, nor lessen the pecuniary benefits conferred by the institution upon the place in which it is established. Wherever the best lectures are given and the greatest degree of talent and enterprise are displayed, there the largest number of pupils will be found. It is their own interests they seek to promote, when they select, and not those of the teachers they prefer ; hence every other consideration relative to the peculiarities of the institution, is with them subordinate to the character of the teachers and the amount of useful knowledge to be acquired.

With these truths (confirmed by daily experience) in view, it is amusing enough to hear the complaints and threatenings of those whose pecuniary interests are endangered by the fairest and most liberal competition, and who would willingly enlist the prejudices of society in their favour, so far as to bring in the strong arm of the law to shield them. Not content with *patronage* and *privilege*, with the money and the name of the state, they desire to have a *monopoly* of the right of teaching; would deprive students of medicine of the liberty of preferring the course they may discover to be most conducive to their character and interests, and deny to all, except themselves, the chance of opening sources of general benefit, however much *their* fountains may become dried up or exhausted. So confidently too do some such persons menace the interference of legislative bodies, to prevent citizens of the United States from living by the honourable exertion of their talents, that one might almost imagine our legislators were not Americans—free agents—nor acquainted with the *rights* of those they represent! To hear the legislative power thus brought forward to deter citizens from the exercise of callings in which they are acknowledged to have attained respectability, and even eminence, we might think ourselves subjects of a despotic sovereignty, instead of living under our own laws, made by our own representatives, who hold their stations only so long as they act consistently with the rights and dignity of their constituents. How weak and pitiable must be the condition of those, who in a *free state* and in *times* like ours, have no better way of competing with men emulous of fame and public favour, than by calling on the legislature for grants of *MONOPOLY*, and thus endeavouring to stifle talents with which they dread fairly to contend?

In aid of the same *liberal* policy, the complaint is often made by such persons, that they have no objection to a rival institution, but are offended that a *foreign* College should be established in their immediate vicinity! Were this the

fact, some weight might be allowed to it ; but when it is known that *six* individuals have erected an edifice, highly ornamental to the city, out of *their own* funds ; that *five* of these individuals have been almost their whole lives citizens of, and resident in New-York ; and that *four* out of the six have during fifteen or twenty years past been distinguished as teachers of medicine in the College of the state, while but *one* of the number has come from another state or city of the Union, will not the public duly appreciate the *disinterestedness* and *genuineness* of that patriotism, which is so sensitive in relation to *foreign* influence, as to discover that those who have taught as Americans and citizens of New-York in one street, have become expatriated and disfranchised by instructing pupils in another ?

The *threats*, and clamours about *foreign* influence, with a view, if possible, to prevent competition of *talent*, are so entirely ignoble, so far from the course which men of generous emulation should pursue, so utterly repugnant to the constitution of our country and the spirit of the people, that we can scarcely imagine any thing more absurd, unless it be, that the legislature should GRANT the *monopoly* desired, and proclaim that henceforward votaries of science, and men emulous of fame, should neither dare to seek for reputation nor subsistence within our borders—but depart to other regions, where mind is free—talent at liberty to develope its strength and usefulness, and where the dominion of dulness cannot, by any possibility, be rendered *legitimate* !

But, in the rectitude and wisdom of our fellow-citizens, who preside with so much advantage over the interests of the state, we feel the fullest confidence ; recollecting the beautiful maxim of Cicero—“ *Justis autem et fidis hominibus (id est, BONIS) ita fides habetur, ut nulla sit in his fraudis injuriæque suspicio ; itaque, his salutem nostram, his fortunas, his liberos, rectissimè committi arbitramur.*”

